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Chairman: Mr. Djumala (Vice-Chairman) (Indonesia)

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In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Djumala (Indonesia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 98: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*) (A/56/74, A/56/115-E/2001/92, A/56/115/Corr.1-E/2001/92/Corr.1, A/56/189, A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/303, A/56/304, A/56/318, A/56/358, A/56/395)

(b) International strategy for disaster reduction (A/56/68 and Corr.1, 2 and 3, A/56/76-E/2001/54, A/56/306; A/C.2/56/2)

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(g) Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy, including the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 (A/56/129)

1. **Mr. Jokonya** (Zimbabwe) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Developing countries were directly concerned by the energy issue because the majority of their populations lived in rural areas without electricity. The energy supply situation had deteriorated and women were spending more and more time collecting firewood, in spite of the fact that many of those countries were located in the regions of the world with the most sunlight. The advantages of solar energy were well known: it was environmentally benign and could offer appropriate forms of energy to stimulate economic development at the local level, thereby discouraging migration from rural areas. Conventional energy would not be able to meet the needs of developing countries, where service might not reach the rural areas; connection to the electric power grid would be very costly.

2. The United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy (Nairobi, 1981) had been a significant milestone. It had recommended inter alia the development of new and renewable sources of energy to supplement oil and other fossil fuels. Nearly all countries had attempted to adopt strategies to promote new and renewable sources of energy.

3. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) (Rio, 1992) had then led the international community to carry out various activities to implement Agenda 21, including the 1993 launch by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) of the process which had resulted in the World Solar Summit (Harare, 1996). The many follow-up activities carried out at all levels had made a useful contribution to enhancing awareness of the importance of new and renewable sources of energy, promoting their use and helping the countries concerned to pursue sustainable development. All the efforts of the United Nations system in that area were to be commended, but much remained to be done.

4. Developing countries must step up their efforts to develop new and renewable sources of energy which would enable them in the long term to conserve their forests and reserves of fossil fuels and reduce pollution caused by the conversion of energy from coal, oil and gas. The report of the Secretary-General on that topic (A/56/129) reviewed the main challenges confronting the development and utilization of new and renewable sources of energy, namely, the low priority given to such sources of energy in national energy planning and policy development; the uneven playing field due to subsidies for conventional energy systems; the lack of awareness of technologies, as well as their economic and social benefits; inadequate support for technology development; lack of financing and credit arrangements; lack of manufacturing infrastructure and paucity of skilled human resources.

5. Although the current emphasis of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 was on solar energy, the World Solar Commission was committed to encouraging and promoting research and development activities in all components of new and renewable sources of energy. The Commission, which had been restructured to make it more responsive to the needs of Member States, would assess the achievements of the Programme, obstacles encountered and review its own practices.

6. While the principle of shared but differentiated responsibilities and the desire to provide the best possible assistance to enable developing countries to implement their energy programmes paved the way for sustainable development, the intractable differences that continued to plague the international community in its approach to cooperation with respect to the development of new and renewable sources of energy were of concern. Indeed, a conducive environment should be created to accelerate the development and application, on a wider scale, of new and renewable sources of energy. Governments had an obligation to create an enabling environment so that the private sector would develop the stock of knowledge and technology for the benefit of all. Since the World Summit on Sustainable Development would be held in Africa, he hoped that it would give due attention to the subject of new and renewable sources of energy, leading to the adoption of concrete initiatives that would give impetus to the implementation of programmes of the World Solar Commission.

7. **Mr. Jiménez** (Ecuador) said that the 1997/98 episode of the Southern Oscillation Phenomenon commonly known as "El Niño" had had such a severe economic, social and environmental impact in several regions of the world that the General Assembly had adopted resolution 52/200, which devoted special attention to that phenomenon in order to try to better understand it and be able to develop a long-term strategy designed to predict its intensity and mitigate its effects through international scientific, technical and financial cooperation.

8. In accordance with that resolution, the first Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts on El Niño was held in 1998. The final document adopted, the Declaration of Guayaquil, recommended the establishment of an international research centre on the El Niño/Southern Oscillation. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) then took the lead role in the activities provided for under resolution 54/220, that led to the signing in September 2001 of a Memorandum of Cooperation between WMO and Ecuador.

9. Ecuador had fulfilled all its commitments as a host country. It hoped that the international community would respond favourably to the project and would provide the technical, scientific and financial support required to enable the international research centre on the El Niño/Southern Oscillation to become quickly operational for all countries of the world, especially developing countries which were the most affected by climate change and natural disasters. His delegation also hoped that the draft resolution to be submitted on that subject by the Group of 77, China and Mexico, would enjoy the unanimous support of all delegations.

10. **Ms. Weill-Hallé** (International Fund for Agricultural Development) said that the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, provided an innovative and common framework for removing constraints that trapped the poor in destitution. Indeed, the poor often farmed degraded land that was unable to meet their needs; that resulted in desertification, which was both a cause and consequence of poverty. Since the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was the only environmental convention that integrated all three pillars of sustainable development — economic growth, social development and environmental protection — the international community must ensure that it generated concrete results and must, to that end, mobilize the resources necessary for its implementation.

11. In that context, she was delighted to report that the Fifth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification had opted to strengthen the global mechanism by increasing its core budget.

12. IFAD had begun to integrate the principles of the Convention into its operations by incorporating into IFAD projects the priorities identified in the national action programmes of affected country parties. Those efforts would be further strengthened by cooperation with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which had recently made IFAD an executing agency. The prospects for such a partnership were strengthened by the recent recommendation to incorporate land degradation into the focal areas of GEF. While she applauded that development, she wished to highlight the need for all development partners to continue mainstreaming the principles of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification into their programmes, since GEF funds could only be used for incremental costs associated with global environmental benefits.

13. The Global Mechanism had achieved concrete results in the following areas: mobilization of

resources; promotion of cooperation and coordination; technical assistance and analysis; and the collection and dissemination of information. It was vital however, for Parties to the Convention to provide it with the means to generate resources and partnerships in support of the implementation of the Convention.

14. The World Summit on Sustainable Development would provide an ideal opportunity to assess progress in attaining the objectives set out in the Convention and to raise the international community's awareness of the Convention's potential as a model that incorporated the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

15. The International Conference on Financing for Development would provide an opportunity to advocate the goals of the Convention and find other means of financing its implementation. To that end, IFAD was holding consultations with its partners in order to accelerate rural development and, given the connection between the financing of rural development and of the implementation of the Convention, hoped those efforts would be supported.

16. **Ms. Chenoweth** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) stressed that the activities carried out by her organization were directly linked to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. FAO worked closely with the secretariats and scientific bodies established by those conventions and provided advice and assistance to Member States in their implementation.

17. FAO was actively involved in preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, particularly by helping to prepare reports indicating progress at the global level but, more importantly, that over 1 billion people continued to be victims of food insecurity and poverty, and that land degradation, soil loss and desertification had not been reversed. While the adoption of new technologies had indeed resulted in significant increases in agricultural production, the poorer countries had hardly benefited from them. It was therefore vital to involve resource users in decision-making in order to address more effectively the needs of low-income countries, which generally had fragile ecosystems.

18. With respect to biodiversity, FAO, through its Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, was the major forum for discussion of policy and regulatory instruments dealing with biodiversity. The Commission had negotiated a revision of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources; the new version would be binding and would provide an agreed framework at the international level for the conservation and sustainable use of those resources, which were at the base of world food security.

19. With regard to desertification, the Strategic Framework for FAO recognized the conflict between food security and the need to conserve, rehabilitate and develop fragile ecosystems. FAO was nonetheless intensifying its activities under the Convention to Combat Desertification. To that end, it had launched negotiations with the secretariat of the Convention, IFAD and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) concerning the implementation of the Convention and assistance to be provided to Member States in that area.

20. FAO continued to stress the importance of renewable sources of energy in its activities for food security and rural development. Developing countries generally had renewable sources of energy and the necessary technologies for their utilization, but they required information. Local and national authorities in the energy and agriculture sectors in those countries must be provided assistance in formulating the necessary policies and developing technical and financial mechanisms to elaborate programmes to promote renewable sources of energy. Agriculture and forestry programmes played a key role in the development of the energy sector. Moreover, since the production of renewable sources of energy was labour-intensive, their promotion could play a considerable role in creating jobs.

21. **Mr. Enkhsaikhan** (Mongolia) said that the objective of economic growth set out in Agenda 21 was difficult to achieve in landlocked developing countries, which were heavily dependent on exports of primary commodities and overexploited their natural resources, decreasing productivity, particularly in the agricultural sector. In the case of Mongolia, increased cashmere production had led to increases in the livestock

population and, thus, increased pressure on pastures, nearly 80 per cent of which were now degraded. The situation had been aggravated by successive drought and heavy snowfall in the past two years and the country was now facing a threat of decreased agricultural production, the backbone of its economy. Thus, the World Summit on Sustainable Development should seriously address the issue of helping the most disadvantaged and vulnerable countries, including landlocked developing countries. In that connection, the regional round tables prior to the Summit should provide an opportunity to elaborate proposals and innovative approaches aimed at facilitating the implementation of the Rio commitments, drawing on the experience and expertise of independent experts in the field of sustainable development.

22. With 40 per cent of its territory covered by desert, Mongolia had made implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification a national priority and had been the fourth country in Asia to adopt a national action programme in that area. Accordingly, it had carried out 14 projects at the national and local levels and had promoted cooperation with its Russian and Chinese neighbours, and with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the areas of environmental protection and monitoring and water resource management and use. Mongolia, however, had tremendous difficulties in implementing its national action programme, owing to financial and human-resource constraints which limited the programme's impact on research, monitoring and coordination. Mongolia was thus unable to asses the impact of desertification on its socio-economic development. Despite those difficulties, it was resolved to implement its national action programme in close cooperation with its multiple partners.

23. **Ms. Khan-Cummings** (Trinidad and Tobago), after associating herself with the statements made by the Chairman of the Group of 77 and China and the Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States, said that her Government had participated in various international and national forums to pursue some of the objectives of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. In cooperation with the Global Environment Facility, Trinidad and Tobago had hosted a workshop to enhance the capacity of small island developing States to deal with environmental degradation and global environmental management. It had also received assistance from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which had developed a regional strategic paper to identify common problems and potential solutions for integrating natural resources conservation measures into rural development initiatives.

24. Insufficient attention had been given to information and communications technologies by small island developing States, which nonetheless needed access to new opportunities in that field in order to promote economic development. Much also remained to be done with regard to the establishment of a vulnerability index. With regard to international trade, small island developing States believed that special and differential clauses should enhance their capacity to function effectively within a globalized trading system.

25. A group of experts from small island developing States had determined that in order to prepare for the World Summit on Sustainable Development and pursue the implementation of Agenda 21, there was an urgent need to tackle such overriding issues as the high levels of poverty and income inequality and the serious threats to biological diversity in those countries, and to provide technical and financial assistance for development. States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) would continue to be vigilant and actively involved in preparations for the Summit. For its part, Trinidad and Tobago would pursue its goal of sustained growth and development and would continue to cooperate with the international community to that end.

26. **Mr. Kogda** (Burkina Faso), after associating himself with the statement made by the Group of 77 and China, said that desertification was an impediment to any action on behalf of sustainable development, for it exacerbated poverty, particularly in rural areas. Because of its geographical location, Burkina Faso faced repeated droughts and had adopted measures to protect the environment and promote development, calling upon a number of actors, including the Government, local authorities, civil society, the private sector and development agencies. With regard to the management of its natural resources, the country had established a monitoring and evaluation system in order to define the indicators to be used at the national and local levels.

27. In the fight against desertification, research should make it possible to understand the phenomenon

and devise solutions for mitigating its effects. In that connection, development partners should support the activities of regional research centres, such as the Sahel Institute and the Agro-Hydro-Meteorological (AGRHYMET) regional centre. For its part, environmental education would have the aim of laying the groundwork for a national policy, placing an action framework at the disposal of actors, and promoting community participation and an active partnership. Actions undertaken by the international community to deal with environmental degradation should be supported. Accordingly, the Global Environment Facility should continue to play a leading role in solving environmental problems, while ensuring that the provisions of the various conventions adopted at the Rio Summit were implemented.

28. **Mr. Pimentel** (Dominican Republic) said that he endorsed the statements made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by the representative of Chile on behalf of the Rio Group, respectively. He welcomed the important progress made since the Rio Summit and hoped that the World Summit on Sustainable Development would help to secure the additional resources needed for the full implementation of Agenda 21. He also hoped that the conclusions of the Summit would be transparent, feasible and, above all, accepted by all.

29. For its part, his Government had, since coming to power a little more than a year earlier, endeavoured to implement a vast national reforestation plan for watersheds, nature reserves and mountain areas, and to take steps to protect or clean up watercourses and lagoons. A national disaster control commission had also been established to deal with the impact of the El Niño phenomenon, which devastated the region during each cyclone season.

30. His delegation asked that specific measures be adopted at the international level on behalf of small island States. It would also do its utmost to ensure that initiatives were taken at the Johannesburg Summit to combat desertification, which affected Africa in particular.

31. **Mr. Chan-hee Lee** (Republic of Korea) noted with satisfaction the measures adopted to protect biological diversity, prevent biotechnology risks and improve exchanges of information. It was important to put in place effective mechanisms that would enable developing countries to benefit from research and development activities in that area and from the use of biological and genetic resources, particularly by encouraging the public and private sectors to carry out research projects responsive to the needs of developing countries. It was also important to provide the public with concrete information and to take decisions in a transparent manner concerning biotechnologies which played a large role in preserving biological diversity.

32. In view of the important role of new and renewable energy sources in sustainable development, it was regrettable that the uncertainty in marketing such sources was hampering their development, specifically by discouraging private investment. In order to solve that problem, the energy price structure should be adjusted and public-private joint investment should be promoted. For its part, the Republic of Korea was preparing a long-term plan to adjust the price structure in order to raise the absolute and relative price of highly polluting energy sources, which would encourage investment in energy-saving equipment and the development of alternative energy sources. By 2004, the Republic of Korea also planned to produce electricity for 17,000 households by recovering landfill gas, thus reducing greenhouse gases by about 500,000 tons of carbon dioxide per year.

33. **Mr. Gospodinov** (Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that the Federation was deeply involved in activities concerning disaster response and management and accorded the highest priority to assisting victims of disasters.

34. Contrary to what the media or current concerns over climate change would seem to suggest, natural disasters currently killed between 70 and 80,000 people a year, as compared to 3 million a year in the early twentieth century. It was therefore wrong to say that an increasing number of people were affected by disasters. It should be noted, however, that nowadays most disasters destroyed more livelihoods than lives. Fifty years ago, about 50 million people were affected a year by disasters, compared to some 256 million in 2000. Natural disasters were often worsened by vulnerable ecological, economic and social conditions, which concealed deeper structural causes such as global warming, unplanned urbanization or extreme poverty, which were in turn aggravated by the massive influx of victims of disasters into often over-populated, unhygienic and dangerous parts of urban areas. The International Federation provided assistance to over 50

million people in 2000, compared to 5 million in 1990. The main cause of that increase was the number of hydro-meteorological disasters such as floods, wind storms and droughts, which had doubled since 1996. That was why the International Federation was currently carrying out a study on the impact of climate change in the context of disaster preparedness.

35. The International Federation sought to increase the capacities of local communities and countries to cope with disasters. Indeed, effective planning depended first and foremost on the presence of teams of local volunteers capable of providing basic assistance to victims well before any outside support arrived, as was demonstrated during the recent disasters in Nepal and Mozambique. However, Governments had the responsibility for establishing and continuously updating national disaster preparedness structures.

36. Inter-sectoral partnerships were crucial to fostering a multidisciplinary approach to disaster reduction. The International Strategy on Disaster Reduction had an Inter-Agency Task Force of which the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies was a member.

37. **Mr. Don Nanjira** (World Meteorological Organization) said that it was necessary to link the issues discussed under agenda item 98 to the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg in 2002, 10 years after the Rio Summit. There must also be a link between science and development. Science and technology had an enormous role to play in sustainable development and environmental protection. Increased applications of scientific and technological advances resulted, as the experience of Bangladesh demonstrated, in better yields in food crops and a reduction in the negative impact of natural disasters. Therefore, the international community could not afford to ignore the contributions of science and technology.

38. The issues considered must be linked to the outcomes of the Yokohama Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, the precursor of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. It was necessary to enhance the capacities of developing nations to enable them to deal effectively with environment- and development-related problems, including natural disasters, because those countries were the most vulnerable to climate change, desertification, ozone layer depletion, greenhouse gas emissions, pollution problems and the continued loss of biodiversity. Finally, there was a need to link indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices to the discussions on the environment and sustainable development. Traditional methods must be scientifically assessed and improved so that they could be more efficiently applied.

39. Maximum use should be made of the prospects offered by the Sassakawa Award for natural disaster reduction and prevention. WMO would continue to participate actively in natural disaster mitigation and prevention, since nearly 75 per cent of natural disasters were hydrometeorological in origin. His organization would also participate in the meetings of the various conferences of the parties to the conventions on climate change, biodiversity and to combat desertification and other similar international instruments, such as the Barbados Programme of Action on Small Island Developing States and the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. WMO would continue to fully support the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the implementation of Agenda 21 and participate actively in the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

40. **Ms. Freudenschuss-Reichl** (United Nations Industrial Development Organization), speaking on the promotion of new and renewable sources of energy, said that energy was a prerequisite for economic and social development as well as for industrial development. Yet, it was estimated that one third of the world's population, most of whom lived in the rural areas of developing countries, did not have access to electricity or to other modern energy services. If the international community was serious about implementing the goals of the Millennium Declaration, in particular that of reducing by half the number of people living in absolute poverty by 2015, it must focus on energy. The eighteenth Congress of the World Energy Council held in Buenos Aires proposed complementing the Millennium Declaration targets with a corresponding target of cutting in half the number of people without access to energy. The development of rural energy must be seen as an integral part of an overall rural development strategy, including income and employment generation. Providing energy, especially electricity, required considerable investment. Innovative policies, including

public funding for rural electrification programmes and the provision of incentives for the private sector to cater to energy needs in rural areas, were required at the national and international level.

41. Any sustainable energy scenario required an increase in renewable energy from the current share of 14 per cent of global energy. Some UNIDO programmes focused on the promotion of renewable energy technologies; the organization was also working on building local capabilities in developing countries for the fabrication, installation, maintenance and after-sales service of renewable energy technologies. In doing that, it was important to build long-term partnerships between the public and private sectors. Clean energy technology and energy efficiency were two other areas where improvements needed to be made at the international level for energy to play its most useful role in the context of sustainable development. UNIDO had a unique role in the United Nations to address the issues of industrial energy use in developing countries. It worked in partnership with many other organizations at the international, regional and national levels.

42. **Mr. Lewis** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the members of the Alliance of Small Island States, said that socio-economic development and environmental protection were inextricably linked. Substantive action and renewed political will were necessary to promote sustainable development and help those at risk, particularly the poor and the most vulnerable groups. The Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados, had been the first global effort to translate Agenda 21 and its principles into action. The Barbados Programme of Action was of paramount importance to small island developing States, since it directly addressed their unique situation and vulnerabilities. Development and environmental protection had become inseparable processes. The Secretary-General, in his road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, had called for the full and rapid implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. While the small island developing States bore the primary responsibility for such implementation, they would be helpless without the partnership of donors.

43. Traditional modalities of development and trade support would have to be changed; the small island developing States were confronted by direct obstacles, particularly high energy costs, transport and communication problems, dependence on remote markets and vulnerability to natural disasters. Global solutions were therefore critical, and the small island developing States were resolved to participate actively in the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

44. Over the years, the conservation of biological diversity had proved to be a fundamental component of sustainable development, and island States had gained much from being parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Similarly, the countries in the Alliance of Small Island States were committed to becoming better informed on the implications of acceding to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Being totally dependent on imported petroleum, which caused severe trade imbalances, the small island developing States were seeking more sustainable energy systems but had neither the capacity nor the means to invest in renewable sources of energy and therefore appealed for support from the international financial institutions, including the Global Environment Facility.

45. It was also important to know how the measures adopted were put into practice. The United Nations, specialized agencies and donor countries could play a useful role by focusing on practical means of cooperation and coordination. The small island developing States, at a disadvantage because of their isolation and smallness, must find ways to attract private-sector financing and secure the necessary assistance and cooperation. Moreover, the evolution of the Small Island Developing States Network (SIDS/Net), which had become a significant tool for sustainable development, was the pride of the States members of the Alliance. The network's survival, however, was contingent on voluntary contributions, and the Alliance believed that its financing should be included in the regular budget of the United Nations.

46. **Ms. Alfsen-Norodom** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), speaking on the Convention on Biological Diversity, said that UNESCO, through its Intergovernmental Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB), cooperated with the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and its secretariat, and that the most recent Conference of the Parties had invited UNESCO to launch a global initiative on biodiversity, education and public awareness, designed to mobilize governments, experts and organizations in all

countries. An overall strategy and draft programme of work for that initiative had already been developed and four priority areas had been identified: raising public awareness about biodiversity and providing advice on the integration of biodiversity into capacity-building projects; highlighting communication and educational aspects in order to harmonize local, regional and international policy and facilitate the adoption of intersectoral policies; developing practical models for biodiversity education through lessons learned and best practices, including communication with grass-roots organizations. The question of biodiversity education and public awareness had a global dimension and should involve numerous institutions. UNESCO, as task manager for two important chapters of Agenda 21, namely, Science for sustainable development (chapter 35) and Promoting education, public awareness and training (chapter 36), was prepared to contribute to the preparatory process for the Johannesburg Summit.

47. **Mr. Gamaleldin** (Egypt) drew attention to the African regional ministerial meeting, held recently within the context of preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which had stressed that land degradation and desertification were the root causes of poverty, particularly in Africa, where 70 per cent of the poor lived in rural areas. He welcomed the work of the secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, to which the General Assembly should provide strong support, particularly by increasing its budget and allocating sufficient human, administrative and financial resources to ensure that it would no longer be exclusively dependent on extrabudgetary contributions. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposal to seek a review of the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World. The World Summit should include a major component on natural disasters — 90 per cent of whose victims were in developing countries — which, according to the Secretary-General's estimates, caused at least $100 billion in annual losses, in addition to a heavy toll in human lives.

48. He requested clarification as to the composition of the Inter-Agency Task Force referred to in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (A/56/68), particularly with regard to representation of regional organizations. His delegation believed that such representation should be established on a permanent — not a rotating — basis: in the case of Africa, there was only one organization, namely, the Organization of African Unity, and rotation would exclude representation of a continent often struck by serious natural disaster. Moreover, the report stated that the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs would continue to designate the representatives of non-governmental organizations and civil society; his delegation believed that a formal mechanism should be contemplated, in order to guarantee that such appointments were made within the framework of intergovernmental machinery.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.